

"The visible trappings of religion on Ifalik, like nearly all their artifacts are extremely simple. The so-called 'house of the gods' at Weluāra differs neither in appearance nor use from any other dwelling. The most distinctive building on the atoll, the men's house at Katēlū, has indeed some religious significance. The equipment for Maroligar's special ritual, described on p. _____, is kept there, and a cloth commonly hangs on the front wall as an offering to a god. But the symbolism of this building, as shown in the chapter on government, emphasizes human rank and authority more than religion.

Most conspicuous of religious emblems are what I have called shrines on some of the house platforms, just outside one end - the western end in every case I noticed - of a dwelling. These are little round flower-beds, about a yard in diameter, spread with clean, smooth sand that contrasts with the coral gravel of the rest of the platform. They are called tariaga (once recorded as tariege), but if Tom and I managed to understand each other on this point, the general word for flowers (mware), is also sometimes applied to them. The plants grown on them emphasize verdure and fragrance rather than blossoms: the large 'elephant-ear' leaves of true tar (wot) also prized as food; an occasional sprouting coconut, with leaves two or three feet high; and various aromatic shrubs, such as warung. During a ceremony the greenery was supplemented by a whole fresh coconut leaf and a leafy shoot of aro, stuck into the sand.

Most elaborate of these shrines is that for the great gods at Weluāra. In addition

1: Burrows--194
116, 778, 353, 824

(1947-48)

Woleaians-2
Ifalik

to the plants, four rods called guruguru, the general name for walking-stick, are stuck into the sand, projecting to various heights. There is one each for the four great gods: Aluelap, Lugeilang, Wolfat, and Tiliir. They are painted or dyed in various colors: one red, one white, one in broad horizontal bands of alternating flame-color and a very dark green, nearly black. The pigment for the flame-colored bands is the prized rang or baked turmeric, imported from one of the high islands. "

4: Krämer--222
116, 301, 353

(1909) 1937

Woleaians
Woleai

Hellwig shows head wreaths, ulevars, which are dried and hung up in the house as
souvenirs (Kotzebue: kabulipeu).

4: Krämer--256

116, 353

(1909) 1937

Woleaians

Woleai

Hellwig shows a hook, tauung, for suspension of food baskets; according to Born it is sometimes made of the vertebrae of sharks.

CHAPTER II

MOSTLY ABOUT PEOPLE

THURSDAY, the first day after the NETTLE left, was overcast, with occasional drizzling rains. This was probably just as well because it cut down on the temptation to wander; so we could concentrate on the organization of camp at the Fan Nap. 114 132

The Fan Nap—the "Men's House"—was a large structure, some forty feet long and twenty wide, with a high thatched roof that sloped steeply to within a couple of feet of the ground on the sides. The ends were closed with matting down to within four feet of the ground, which meant that any adult must crouch on entering or leaving. The main cross-beams inside were higher, but still low enough to be a constant hazard. I never did learn to use the proper inside-of-house crouch, and kept battering my head all summer. Ted and Don were more alert—or at least better at dodging. 345

The front part of the Fan Nap, nearest the lagoon, was used for sleeping quarters. Ted and Don had their cots at the sides, under the stringers—beams that had been hewn out of huge breadfruit logs. The logs looked precariously balanced on the heavy coral blocks that served as the corner posts of the house. Collapse of the house would have caused the occupants of the cots to be instantly crushed. The great beams, so close above, were thus at first something of a mental hazard. But they had withstood the gales of many years and were clearly solidly placed—and they were very convenient for hanging mosquito nets. 123 114 353

Tables and boxes were arranged in the central area to make working space. The equipment included carpenter's tools, and with these some 114 123

114 of the wooden packing boxes were converted into sets of shelves. The
123 cases of food were piled along the sides in the back part of the house, which became the kitchen area, cozily walled with cartons of sliced peaches and spam.

118 There was an altar in the back part of the Fan Nap that was a con-
353 stant mental hazard because we did not want to offend the local people by desecrating this shrine with profane objects. The altar was a ramshackle affair, contrasting strongly with the usual Ifalukian workmanship, and this may have indicated that it was not taken very seriously; but we wanted to run no risk of giving offense. There was a large chest there, too, which we judged to be a sort of depository for the appurtenances of government. Among other things, the American flag was stored in the chest, to be hauled out and attached to a pole on the lagoon shore when a ship was sighted.

831 There was another sacred touch to the Fan Nap—a phallus attached
118 to the main front center post and pointing out across the lagoon. The phallus, which pointed westward toward Woleai, the nearest neighboring atoll, commemorated an event of Ifaluk legend—or history. The story was one of violence and conquest and seemed curiously anomalous in the Ifalukian folklore, contrasting as it did with the present completely non-aggressive and peaceful character of the people. Ted
[181] thought that it might reflect memories of an actual conquest by the people of Ifaluk of earlier inhabitants of the neighboring atolls. Maur,
[113] the main character in the legend, was certainly the "culture hero" of the people of the island.

The phallus did not seem to be the object of any special veneration or cult—it was just there. Once, later in the summer, when we were trying to explain the money system of the United States, we were questioned about the portrait heads on the coins. Don explained Washington and Lincoln as long-dead "chiefs" thus commemorated.

169 Yani got the idea at once. "Ifaluk have picture of dead chief, too," he said, grinning, as he pointed toward the phallus of Maur on the Fan Nap.

132 The weather continued to interfere with the starting of field work. Friday it rained almost continuously all day—and of course the rain

Mostly About People

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Menstruating women on Ifaluk, as in many cultures, were subject to a variety of taboos. There were four special houses on the atoll which served as menstrual huts for each of the four villages into which the households were grouped. A woman, at the onset of menstruation, retired to one of these, removed from the ordinary life of the community until her period was over.

The census-taking was not a rapid process. It took interminable palavering among Tom, the chiefs and the members of each household to get a list of names, with clan affiliations, marital status, and such-like lore dear to the anthropological heart. When the list was complete, Don supervised the weighing and taking of heights—the only physical measurements practical with the available equipment. The weights were taken on a set of ordinary bathroom scales that had been picked up in Guam. The measuring pole was less prosaic—made from a pole found in the Fan Nap and calibrated to the nearest quarter inch by marking with a ball-point pen. Maroligar officiated at the weighing and measuring; after he had watched the first two or three operations, he explained to each person where to put his feet on the scales, tried to persuade him to stand up straight for the measuring, and coaxed the shier women and children into cooperating.

In the meantime I would prow around with the big Crown Graphic camera, snapping whatever caught my interest, and popping flash-bulbs to the delight of the children who had a new toy in the used bulbs.

There was plenty of time to look around while Ted was trying to get all of the names and relationships straight. We noticed that the houses were well built, with big posts stuck in the ground to which stringers and rafters were firmly lashed with stout coconut-fiber rope; the roofs were coconut thatch, and the walls were mats woven of coconut leaves. The houses were low, and people did not stand in them, but sat or sprawled on the floor, which was very clean and covered with plaited coconut mats. There were no windows as such, but each house had four to six doors, which could be closed with more coconut mats when desired. The interiors were dim—but there was no need for good reading light. There was little or no clutter on the floor, except for a few things propped against the walls. Most of the family posses-

- 353 sions were put in bags or boxes of various sorts and slung by ropes from the rafters, the whole upper part of the house thus being a sort of floorless attic.

123 The citizens of Ifaluk cooperated nicely in the census operation,
125 though they seemed rather amused at such strange antics. Those who had been weighed and measured loved to stand around and watch the rest as they passed through the routine. It was hard to get some of the people, especially the women, to stand up straight enough for a proper height measurement. They had, in many cases, what seemed to be a permanent crouch, perhaps resulting from the low doorways and interiors, perhaps the product of a sort of chronic deference, since the women of Ifaluk knew their place—always bowing respectfully in the presence of the male animal. (Ted suspected that this show was superficial and that the women, there as everywhere, knew their power and how to use it; one of the five chiefs, it turned out, was a woman.)

291 There were no ideas of modesty associated with the breasts; and the ladies didn't seem to be bothered by the fact that their skirts gaped rather badly near the belt-line behind. But they were very modest about legs from the knee up and were careful never to expose an inch of thigh. Their preoccupation with keeping their skirts close about their legs was clear enough as they stepped on the scales. Don, impressed by their modest maneuvers as he tried to read the dial on the scales, remarked that they would really be shocked by an American bathing suit.

855 The people seemed to take wonderful care of the children, the men
861 holding babies and comforting the young as often as the women. Ted and his colleague, Spiro, in their 1948 study, found that the kids were never spanked, and rarely yelled at—though it was said that they sometimes doused them in the lagoon if they got too obstreperous. At the movies on the NETTLE Don noticed one man gently ladling sea water on a bawling baby. The baby stopped crying quickly—and he made a mental note to try this on his own daughter when he got back home.

854 The smallest infants were in cradles. These were square boxes with low sides, fastened by a bridle of cords from the corners, and suspended a few inches above the floor by a rope from the rafters. The babies were tucked in with some old clothes, and seemed contented enough.

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958

OR21 Woleai OR21

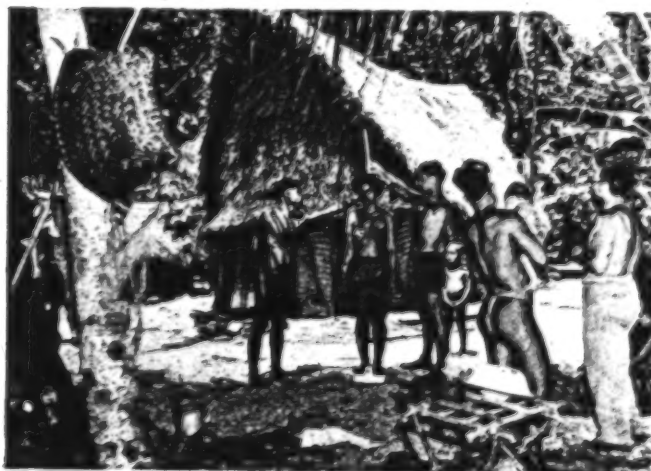
Ifaluk



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ABOVE There was little clutter on the floor of the houses: most family possessions were slung from the rafters.

BELOW The people of Ifaluk cooperated nicely in the census operation.



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